

M: 17-53
Seneca Stone Mill
(Seneca Quarry Cutting Building)
North bank of Potomac River,
west of Seneca Creek
Seneca

c. 1830s

One of the two buildings remaining at the Seneca quarry is the stone-cutting building, on the east side of the quarry. It was constructed of Seneca stone finished in rectangular blocks, probably in the 1830s, and was doubled in size to its present dimensions sometime later than 1830. The four exterior and center walls are standing and are reasonably sound. Dimensions of the shell of the building were approximately 30' x 75' x 15'. Massive wooden beams formed lintels for doors, windows, and pulley shaft openings. A stone-lined trough, 5' x 6', ran through the building and provided the water, diverted from the C&O Canal, to power the turbine which operated the cutting and polishing machines. Over the saws were perforated pipes from which water dropped to prevent the saws from overheating.

An important feature of the Seneca quarry, this water-powered mill cut stone used in the construction of the original Smithsonian Institution building in 1849, as well as in the construction of the C&O Canal and many homes in Washington, D.C. and Georgetown. The mill was a vast improvement over the earlier method by which expert stonemasons would shape the blocks of stone by using hand tools. Yet the process was still slow and tedious; the stone was still quarried by hand and was brought to the mill in mule-drawn gondolas over a narrow-gauge railroad. The above-mentioned cutting and polishing machines

could make an inch cut in a block three feet by three feet by one foot thick in an hour's time. The stone was carried by canal barges to Washington, D.C., often right to the building site.

16037441416

1. Name of Landmark: Seneca Stone-Cutting Mill
2. Location: Northwest of the southern end of Tschiffely Mill Road and northwest of the Seneca Creek Aqueduct on the C&O Canal.
3. Present use: Part of the C&O Canal National Historical Park; the mill is in ruins and is overgrown.
4. Owner: Department of Natural Resources, State of Maryland
5. Date or period built: About 1837
6. Architectural description: The dimensions of the shell of the building were approximately 30' x 75' x 15'. The exterior walls were made of Seneca sandstone; massive wooden beams formed lintels for doors, windows, and pulley shaft openings. A stone-lined trough, 5' x 6', ran through the building and provided the water, diverted from the canal, to power the turbine which operated the cutting and polishing machines. Over the saws were perforated pipes from which water dropped to prevent the saws from over-heating.
7. Builder:
8. Original owner: Possibly John Parke Custis Peter, of the prominent Georgetown family, who in 1837 acquired a quarry in the area, the same date that the mill was built.
9. Historic association: An important feature of the Seneca quarry, this water-powered mill cut stone used in the construction of the original Smithsonian Institution building in 1849, as well as in the construction of the C&O Canal and many homes in Washington, D.C. and Georgetown. The mill was a vast improvement over the earlier method by which expert stonemasons would shape the blocks of stone by using hand tools. Yet the process was still slow and tedious; the stone was still quarried by hand and was brought to the mill in mule-drawn gondolas over a narrow-gauge railroad. The water, which the mill purchased from the C&O Canal Company, powered a turbine which drove a shaft in the stone trough running through the mill. This shaft provided the power via belts connected to pulleys overhead which operated the cutting and polishing machines. In an hour's time the saws could make an inch cut in a block three feet by three feet by one foot thick. The stone was carried by canal barges to Washington, D.C., often right to the building site.
10. Bibliography:
 1. Balliff, Barbara. "Stone quarrying in Montgomery County, Maryland." Paper for a college course in history. University of Maryland. 1968.
 2. Douglas, Paul and Jones, William. "Sandstones, Canals, and the Smithsonian." The Smithsonian Journal of History. Spring, 1968.

3. History of Potomac. "Seneca, once a commercial center," by Claude W. Owen. Published by Potomac Almanac. Second edition, 1970.
4. Montgomery County Story. November 1971. "Seneca," by Jane Chinn Sween.

11. Researcher: Robert Kasperek
13409 Oriental St.
Rockville, Md. 20853

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE	Maryland
COUNTY	Montgomery
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME	
COMMON:	Seneca Quarry
AND/OR HISTORIC:	Potomac Red Sandstone Company; Seneca Stone Company

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Tschiffeley Mill Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Seneca		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Eighth	
STATE: Maryland	COUNTY: Montgomery	ZIP CODE: 20851	

3. CLASSIFICATION					
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS		ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC	
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied		<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted	
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered					
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious			
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY	
OWNER'S NAME: Multiple, Private and Public	
STREET AND NUMBER: CITY OR TOWN: STATE:	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION	
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Montgomery County Courthouse	
STREET AND NUMBER: E. Montgomery Avenue and N. Washington Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Rockville	STATE: Maryland

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS	
TITLE OF SURVEY: Maryland Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks	
DATE OF SURVEY: 1970	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Maryland Historical Trust	
STREET AND NUMBER: 2525 Riva Road	
CITY OR TOWN: Annapolis	STATE: Maryland

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If Known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE.

The Seneca Quarry is located on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and the east bank of the Potomac River about twenty-five miles northwest of Washington, near the village of Seneca, Maryland. The north retaining wall of the canal, a culvert to conduct a small creek under the canal at the west end of the quarry, and the Seneca Aqueduct, which carries the canal over Seneca Creek, are constructed of the local Seneca stone.

Only two buildings stand in the designated area: the cutting building at the east side of the quarry, and a duplex on the hill overlooking the quarry and river. Both structures are in ruins and are constructed of Seneca stone.

The cutting building for "working" architectural blocks was built probably in the 1830's, and doubled in size to its present dimensions sometime later than 1830. The four exterior and center walls, of Seneca stone, are standing and are reasonably sound. There are no remains of the timber roof or other wood portions. From the gable (south) which faces the canal, the outline of a low-pitched roof can be traced. The stone is rough finished in rectangular blocks.

Probably dating from mid nineteenth century, the duplex on the hill is built of rough rubble stone laid in regular courses except at the corners, sills, and lintels. On the east facade, the latter are smooth finish, rectangular blocks. Some of the same smooth blocks were used as paving, leading to the two east doors. The two and one-half story structure had two rooms on each floor of each unit. A single fireplace was located in each west room. Most of the south gable has collapsed beneath the 'A' roof. One dormer on each side of the roof lights the attic chambers.

The major part of the quarry is located south and southwest of the duplex. Its red walls and rough floor are overgrown with an accumulation of vegetation and look as though they had never been disturbed.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20560

#17-32

M: 17-53

STONE CUTTING AND DRESSING BUILDING OF THE SENECA QUARRY

Seneca, Montgomery County, Maryland (77°21' W x 39°04' N)

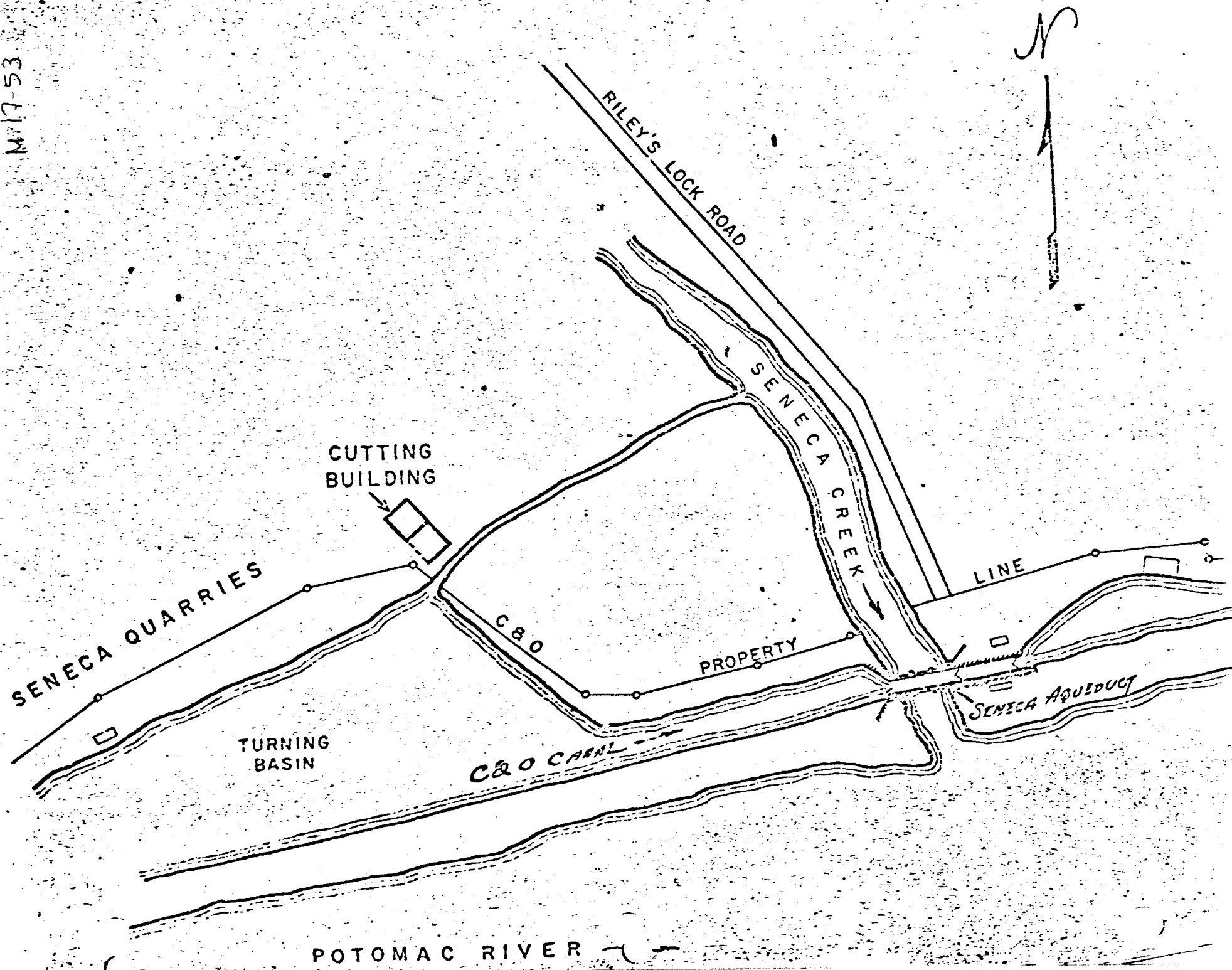
The Seneca quarries and the associated cutting and dressing building are located on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and the banks of the Potomac River about 25 miles northwest of Washington, near the town of Seneca. In the 1780s the red sand stone (or freestone) from the quarries was used in the construction of the locks of the skirting canal around the Great Falls of the Potomac on the Virginia side of the river; in the 1820s the C&O Canal's Seneca Aqueduct and a number of locks in the area were built of the stone; and in 1847-8 the Smithsonian Institution building was constructed of Seneca stone after a long and scientifically conducted for the most durable stone in the Washington area.

The cutting building for working architectural blocks was built probably in the 1830s, doubled in size to its present dimensions sometime later. The finishing machinery was powered by water drawn from the Canal, dropping through a wheel or turbine into Seneca Creek at a lower level. The rough blocks were brought to the shed by mule cars on a narrow-gauge track and the finished stone was transported to Washington by the Canal. In addition to the Smithsonian building, Seneca stone is seen all over the Capital in buildings great and small as well as in fences, walls and other architectural features. The quarry ceased commercial operations in about 1900 as the veins of good stone ran out.

The property that includes the quarry ledges and the cutting shed is at presently privately owned by Mrs. Harry Y. Pierpoint of Chevy Chase and Seneca. The shed is in essentially ruinous condition. The four exterior and center walls, of Seneca stone, are standing, reasonably sound. There are no remains of the timber roof, or other wood portions of the building. The only evidence of the operational features of the building is a longitudinal trench in the floor that contained the main drive shaft, and several foundation blocks for machinery.

The quarry was described by Paul H. Douglas & William K. Jones in Sandstone, Canals, and the Smithsonian, in the Smithsonian Journal of History, Spring, 1968, pp 41-58.

MA 17-53



M.17-53

SENECA QUADRANGLE

USGS 7.5 minute map

scale: 1: 24 000

1952

Lat. $39^{\circ} 04' 15''$
Long. $77^{\circ} 21' 05''$

SENECA QUARRY

Lat. $39^{\circ} 04' 03''$
Long. $77^{\circ} 21' 04''$

Lat. $39^{\circ} 04' 13''$
Long. $77^{\circ} 20' 26''$

Lat. $39^{\circ} 04' 02.5''$
Long. $77^{\circ} 20' 26''$



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Maryland		M.17-53
COUNTY Montgomery		
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	

122

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Seneca Quarry			
AND/OR HISTORIC: Potomac Red Sandstone Company; Seneca Stone Company			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: TschiFFEley Mill Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Seneca			
STATE: Maryland	CODE 24	COUNTY: Montgomery	CODE 031
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: Michael Bourne			
DATE OF PHOTO: March 20, 1972			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Maryland Historical Trust 2525 Riva Road, Annapolis, Maryland 21401			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. West elevation			

GPO 921.737



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

Maryland

4:17-53

COUNTY

Montgomery

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON:

Seneca Quarry

AND/OR HISTORIC: Potomac Red Sandstone Company; Seneca Stone Company

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Tschiffeley Mill Road

CITY OR TOWN:

Seneca

STATE:

Maryland

COOE

24

COUNTY:

Montgomery

COOE

031

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Michael Bourne

DATE OF PHOTO: March 20, 1972

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Maryland Historical Trust
2525 Riva Road, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

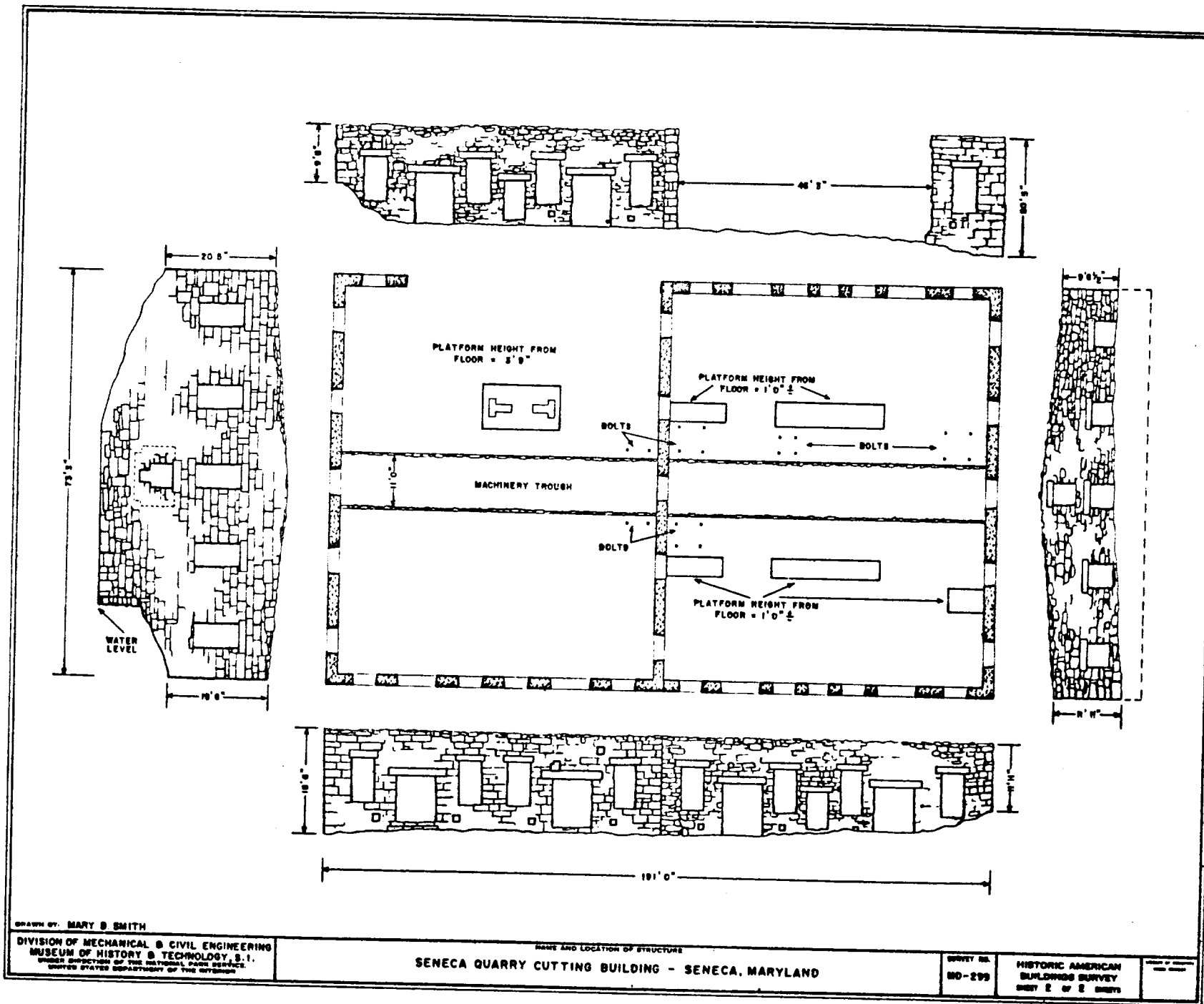
4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Cutting Building, west elevation

GPO 9-21-737





M.17-53

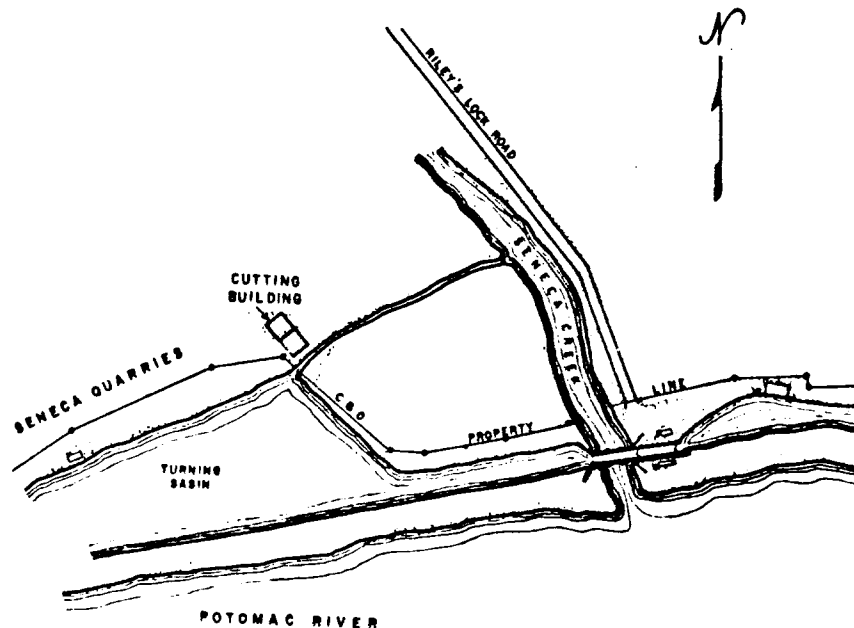
M:17-53

STONE CUTTING AND DRESSING BUILDING Seneca - Montgomery County - Maryland

The Seneca quarries and cutting building are located along the banks of the Potomac River 25 miles northwest of Washington, D.C., near the town of Seneca, Maryland (77°21' W X 39°04' N). In the 1780's the freestone from the quarries was used in the construction of the skirting canals around the Great Falls of the Potomac on the Virginia side of the river; in the 1820's and 1830's various sections of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal were lined with Seneca stone; and in 1847 the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., was constructed of red Seneca freestone.

The cutting and dressing building for the quarried stone was probably built in the 1830's, when water from the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was available as a source of power. A diversionary stream from the canal supplied a turbine which drove a shaft located in a trench in the building. From the shaft the stone saws and polishers were driven by a system of pulleys and flat belts. Stones from the quarries were brought to the building in mule-drawn gondolas over a narrow gauge railroad track; finished stone could be shipped easily to the Washington area.

The building was measured and photographed in January 1968 by a team consisting of William K. Jones, Curator of History at the Museum of the Great Plains, Lawton, Oklahoma, and Paul Douglas and Michael Robbins, pre-doctoral candidates in American Studies at the George Washington University, under the sponsorship of the Smithsonian Institution.



DRAWN BY: MARY B. SMITH
DIVISION OF MECHANICAL & CIVIL ENGINEERING
MUSEUM OF HISTORY & TECHNOLOGY, S.I.
UNDER SUPERVISION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

STONE CUTTING BUILDING - SENECA, MARYLAND

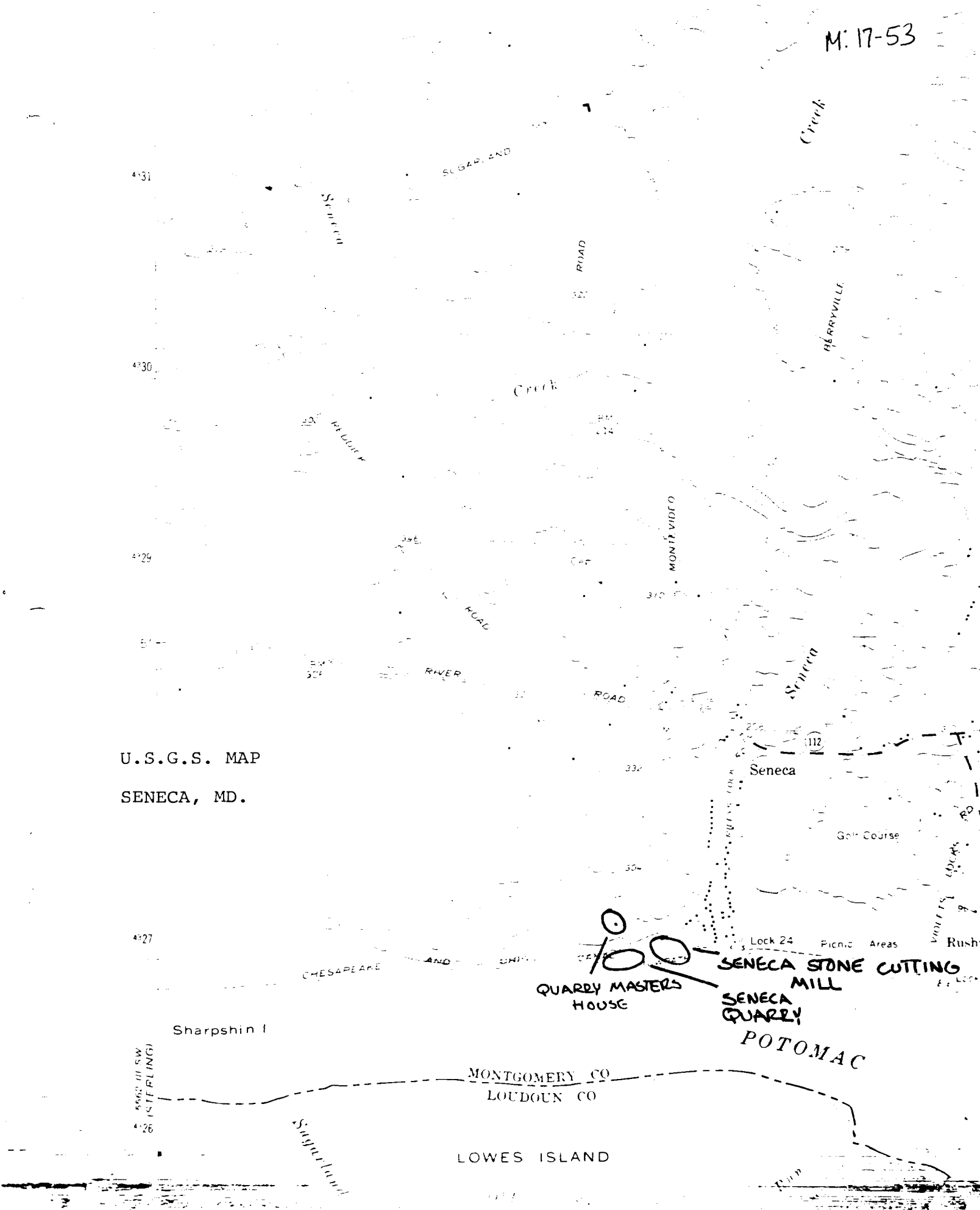
SURVEY NO.
MD-299

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 2 SHEETS

DATE OF SURVEY
APR
1968

M: 17-53

U.S.G.S. MAP
SENECA, MD.





M 17-53

Seneca Stone Cutting Mill
Great Seneca Creek at the
Potomac River
Seneca State Park

NW Elevation MontCty.Hist.Soc



M 17-53

Seneca Stone Cutting Mill
Great Seneca Creek at the
Potomac River

SW Elevation

Mont.Cty.Hist.So



M 12-53

Seneca Sandstone Cutting Mill
Seneca State Park
Seneca, Maryland

SE Elevation

3/79 BMD



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M: 17-50

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